

I voted Yes on H.R. 6429, the STEM Jobs Act of 2012.

This bill, of which I am an original cosponsor, would create a STEM Visa program under which foreign students that earn advanced degrees in the high-demand fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) at American universities could remain in our country to work in those fields. The program would provide 55,000 such visas annually, but would also eliminate the flawed "diversity" visa program so that the total number of legal immigrants to the U.S. is not changed by the bill. The diversity program distributes 55,000 visas each year through a random, lottery process designed to increase immigration from countries that send relatively few immigrants to U.S., irrespective of those individuals' ability to productively contribute to the American economy.

Importantly, before a STEM graduate could obtain a visa, an employer would have to petition on their behalf, notify their state labor department, and that agency would then post the job listing for at least 30 days. This is meant to ensure that the positions being filled by STEM visa individuals could not be adequately filled by an American worker.

I am a very strong supporter of cultivating the high-value, knowledge-based segment of our economy which is reliant on higher education in the STEM fields. Careers in these fields are directly related to greater innovation, economic growth and increased productivity. STEM workers earn twice as much as non-STEM workers, and their rate of unemployment is half that of non-STEM peers. Put simply, these are the kinds of workers we need now more than ever. They create new products, start businesses and then hire workers and give them paychecks. While I am primarily focused on increasing opportunity for American students to succeed in STEM education, it is only right that we allow foreign STEM graduates to work in the U.S. and contribute to our economy after they graduate – rather than go home and compete against us.

The bill failed by a vote of 257 – 158, failing to gain a two-thirds majority needed for approval under suspension of the rules.